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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the Early Childhood Library Specialist Program developed by the School of Library Science at North Carolina Central University, an area of concentration within the Masters of Library Science degree program intended to develop specialists in this area who have the ability to (1) establish rapport with children and their parents, (2) demonstrate knowledge of a diversity of learning resources appropriate for young children, (3) employ effective methods in introducing children to the use of media for learning and recreation, and (4) perform effectively in a leadership role in the learning programs for a variety of community agencies. The role of the librarian in providing services to preschool children is also discussed. (PM)

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LIBRARIES RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF YOUNG CHILDREN

by

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LIBRARIES RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF YOUNG CHILDREN

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Workshop on "Library/Literature Experiences for the Young Child"

Baltimore, October 2, 1980

You have asked about the Early Childhood Library Specialist Program at NCCU - why we developed it, what its major components are, what competencies we are trying to develop. You have asked about the nature of work with preschool children - what makes it different, what librarians should know, what library/literature experiences these children should have, and how parents, teachers, and librarians can work together to provide these experiences. And, finally, you asked about our concepts of the future for our program and for library service to preschool children.

I will discuss some of the questions about our School and work with preschool children, then I will show a slide-tape presentation that will describe our program.

My best explanation of why we developed our program was written in my article in the Winter 1976 issue of the Journal of Education for Librarianship:

> The education of Early Childhood Library Specialists was initiated at the School of Library Science at North Carolina Central University, Durham in 1970. The school's commitment to provide librarians who can serve effectively in North Carolina and elsewhere influenced the decision to undertake this new endeavor. The concepts of providing good learning experiences before a child becomes six years old, of making multimedia learning resources accessible in libraries, and of making libraries more relevant to a greater variety of persons were being discussed frequently in 1970. Concurrently, this school's faculty was reviewing its accomplishments since its establishment in 1941 and

searching for ways that it might make additional contributions.

Investigations of the extent to which librarians were being educated and were serving young children included searching all available library school catalogs and other related literature; visiting selected libraries and other agencies where exemplary work with young children could be observed and information could be obtained; and making a two-year, on-site survey of services to young children in public libraries in North Carolina. The findings revealed that more attention should be given to this area.

The catalogs of 50 library schools, 37 of them American Library Association accredited, were examined. Only one school listed a course that specifically mentioned this age level - "Materials for Young Children" - and it is not located in the United States.

The conclusion drawn from talking with and observing librarians is that they were most interested in serving children after they learned to read and in telling stories to those who could not read. Examples of early childhood educators consulting librarians as they planned, produced, and utilized learning materials were rarely found.

Instruction in the use of media other than books had not been developed fully in library schools in 1970. Media specialists were being educated for schools, but emphasis was upon working with children who were old enough to engage in independent study. Kindergarten teachers usually acquired their own resources and kept them in their rooms or special centers. Much of the media instruction of librarians was given in other departments and not integrated

fully in library science courses.

Public librarians were searching for their identity in 1970. Threats to give school librarians sole responsibility for serving children after they enrolled and the need to bolster lowered circulation statistics by appealing to the current residents of cities stimulated the idea of rendering more service to pre-school children and their parents.

It was assumed that (1) ideal learning experiences for young children involve parents, or their substitutes; (2) parents with low incomes cannot afford to purchase the full range of resources that children should be exposed to for maximum learning; and (3) a considerable number of parents on all economic levels would benefit from the services of a librarian during this early period of their children's lives.

This school was considered especially obligated to respond to this situation because (1) a disproportionate number of Black children have parents with low incomes who are not able to give them adequate early learning experiences; (2) North Carolina did not have a statewide public kindergarten system; (3) there are not enough children's librarians in North Carolina and service should be improved; (4) education for public librarians in North Carolina was considered inadequate; and (5) there was a need to educate school librarians to work with parents and to develop programs which include more than telling stories and circulating easy books to kindergarten children.

The offerings at North Carolina Central might be more properly designated as an "area of concentration"

rather than a program. Some of the requirements in force were designed with the particular characteristics and needs of the students who attend this school in mind. For instance, the faculty recognized the need of all students to have as many experiences with print and nonprint resources as possible and therefore two courses in materials, methods and services are a degree requirement. It was also considered necessary to require a course in children's literature as a prerequisite to the courses for children's librarians, because a majority of the students had not had exposure to these resources when they were children.

The faculty adopted as its objective the development of Early Childhood Library Specialists who have the ability to:

1. Establish rapport with children and their parents
2. Demonstrate knowledge of a diversity of learning resources appropriate for young children
3. Employ effective methods in introducing children to the use of media for learning and recreation
4. Perform effectively in a leadership role in the learning programs of a variety of community agencies.

Components of the Early Childhood Library Specialist Program are the curriculum, a model early learning center, and a parent/child project. "Early Childhood" extends through the sixth grade. Every effort has been made to make the courses relevant while integrating them with the basic library science program. The students are librarians first, with a preference for and some competence in working with young children.

The curriculum includes the general courses required of all students; two courses in Early Childhood Resources and

Services (L.S. 5500, 5510); one course in Parent Education and School-Community Relationships (L.S. 5640); a practicum (L.S. 5620); and other electives chosen on an individual basis for a total of 36 semester hours.

The slide-tape will tell you more about our program.

How is work with preschool children different? Young children are more dependent and, therefore, need more attention. The librarian must communicate and interpret more nonverbal behavior, must be more concerned with attitudes and their development. More initiative is required - children are not coming in with a specific assignment, they are less predictable.

Librarians must/should be more involved with the parents or their surrogates. Sometimes they need a great deal of help in assuming their role in helping children to learn.

Nonprint materials are more important at this level and are less conventional - not curriculum related, although they should be learning related.

Future of Program?

We do not expect to change the basic structure of our program but we are searching constantly for ways to improve it internally. Obtaining parent cooperation is the most difficult, yet important task.

Increasing the student's knowledge of a variety of learning resources is a constant challenge to each faculty member. Too many students have not been exposed to a sufficient number of the materials before they come to library school and the time is short after they enroll. The search for and implementation of improved methods of providing compensatory education and individualized instruction will be intensified.

Jobs of Graduates

schools public libraries

day care centers - head of center

program coordinator

Some are in academic, special, high school, working with other age groups in public libraries.

What librarians need to know about preschoolers

Their characteristics - as a group and individually.

The activities most important to children, such as play.

How to help children learn -

what they need to learn

what resources to have available - a variety

how to use these resources

which services are most feasible

what facilities are needed

The role of parents and how to help them guide their children.

The community and school - persons, agencies/organizations that can provide support services.

The rights of the child.

Library/literature experiences that preschool children should have include (listed by Miriam Ricks, Assistant Professor, North Carolina Central University School of Library Science):

diroamas/peep shows

displays

puppet shows

author/illus. visits

field trips - circus, museum, planetarium

book fairs, exhibits

tasting parties

multi-media presentations

discussion follow-ups

children's theatres

painting/drawing

modeling clay

paper cutting/tearing

role playing

listening to/acting out

writing (dictating)

cooking

stories

pantomime

rhymes

drama

poems

music

art

crafts

nature objects

slides

films

filmstrips

plaques

pictures

clay

mobiles

flannel board

games

puzzles

bulletin board

interest centers

books - picture & wordless

view-master reels

radio

T.V.

telephone - Dial-a-story

Ways Parents, Teachers and Librarians can work together to enrich the educational experience of very young children (Provided by Ricks):

A. Let us review a few of the questions and requests received to relate/identify the needs of these adults:

1. Do you loan live animals?
2. What community resources are accessible for preschool learning?
3. Would you suggest some craft activities for a two-year-old on a rainy day?
4. Do you have materials to teach the formation of the letters of the alphabet?
5. Is my child normal?
6. Would you conduct an in-service training session on how to set up learning stations and how to manage them to prevent overcrowding for my nursery school staff?
7. What tasks do you assign parent volunteers?
8. What basic equipment and materials are needed in a day care center?
9. I need help in explaining death to my youngest daughter. She continues to say, "When my father comes back"--and the list goes on.

B. Librarians can provide the following services:

Parents:

1. Circulate live pets, in cages with food for home use.
2. Provide resources in a library corner and for use in laundromats, stores, shopping centers, waiting rooms of hospitals, health clinics, doctors.

Assemble toy and book packages.

3. Sponsor workshops, discussion sessions on topics such as: child development, preparing for a new baby, home safety, child rearing, learning games, block play, effective discipline, self-concept language development, reading readiness, using radio and TV wisely, child abuse and neglect, health, children with handicaps, childhood illnesses, pet care, food and nutrition, health and safety, toilet training, White House Conference on Families, the parent as teacher, services of the library, books, toy selection, and Non-Sexist and Non-biased materials.
4. Provide newsletter of timely activities (monthly or quarterly).
5. Provide calendar of local events/programs appropriate for the child, or child-oriented.
6. Announce appropriate radio and television programs with suggested pre and post listening/learning activities.
7. Provide infant/toddler resources on:
   a. Examples of fingerplay, action stores, picture books and wordless books.
   b. Use of the flannel board to teach shapes, letters, numbers, and colors.
   c. Show puppet construction and demonstrate use.
   d. Demonstrate (in person or by videotape) storytelling, poetry reading, songs (home, play, and travel uses).
   e. Discuss and demonstrate creative dramatics with children.
   f. Make book displays: craft, hobby, holiday and puppet books, children's cooking and sewing books for their information.

g. Teach library citizenship

h. Provide varied resources such as: cloth and sensory books, educational toys (as blocks, dolls, games, puzzles, stuffed storybook characters), musical instruments, costumes, recordings, audioviausl equipment, and realia for use at home as well as at the library for young children.

i. Exhibit realia with related books and activities, as suggestions for parents.

j. Coordinate and integrate the services, programs, resources, physical facilities, and personnel of public and school libraries with those of other agencies in the community to avoid the duplication of efforts.

k. Encourage parent participation in public/school library programs with young children.

l. Maintain a parent shelf of adult resource materials.

8. Provide a preschool area in school/public libraries.

9. Open during hours convenient to parents (evenings, weekends, holidays) with activities for children while parents read, discuss, etc.

Teachers

1. Mention or describe fingerplays and action stories.

2. Show sell-liked paperbacks, mention read-alounds and suggest titles (a bibliography for distribution).

3. Mention storytelling (demonstrate an excerpt from a story).

4. Show flannel board (construction of board, construction of characters).

5. Show easy puppets

6. Demonstrate AV tricks with the opaque scroll or transparencies for the overhead projector.

7. Show use of cassette player, film projector, record player, sfs projector, other appropriate equipment.
8. Remind of library services
    a. Hours
    b. Bring groups in for programs or visits, etc.
    c. Special programs
9. Suggest or cooperate in sponsoring field trips.
10. Sponsor programs with authors and illustrators of children's books, films, paintings.
11. Offer bulletin boards to display creative works of children.
12. Cooperate to develop library citizenship.

Future for library service to preschool children (Provided by Ricks)

- More mothers entering labor force.
- Increased interest in library service for this group from preschool agencies and organizations.
- School-public library cooperation.
- Home Economics departments with nursery schools.
- Persons who live or work with young children such as parents, students, babysitters, teachers, nurses, and day care workers seek information from libraries.

And now I want to close with a quotation that I began with at our workshop at the AASL Conference in Louisville. I would like to get your opinion of whether it makes sense to you. The statement expresses my dream for the child of the future:

> "The object of a liberal training is not learning, but discipline and enlightenment of the mind. The educated man is to be discovered by his point of view, by the temper of his mind, by his attitude towards life and his fair way of thinking. He can see, he can discriminate, he can combine ideas, and perceive whither they lead; he has insight and comprehension. His mind is a practical instrument of appreciation. He is more apt to contribute light than heat to a discussion, and will oftener than another show the power of uniting the elements of a difficult subject in a whole view." (Black and Kerr, 1961:123)

I have chosen this statement for the following reasons:

1. Experiences of the past ten years have taught me the importance of setting goals and objectives. It occurred to me that it may help us in planning for children if we set as our goal the adult that we want the child to be.
2. As a grandmother of children who are 12, 10, and 2 I am convinced that we <u>can</u> begin at the preschool age to look for and develop the traits that we want to see in adults.
3. As a teacher I have learned that we cannot begin too early to stress discipline and enlightenment of the mind in the learning process.

Let's look again at the traits that are included: (1) seeing; (2) discriminating; (3) combining ideas and perceiving whither they lead; (4) having

insight; comprehension, and appreciation; (5) being able to contribute light rather than heat to a discussion, and (6) being able to unite the elements of a difficult subject in a whole view.

Naturally, some of these abilities will be developed earlier and faster than others, but I hope that you will agree with me that we should begin to think of them at the preschool age so that they will be evident in college.